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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN

¶1. This is an action request - please see para. 4.

¶2. In response to President Obama's speech on the way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, President Ivanov wrote a letter addressed to the President (shared with the media here) in which he commended President Obama for his leadership in this important effort. The letter also documented Macedonia's continual support for the ISAF Mission from 2002, highlighting that over 1100 soldiers have served there, including the current deployment of 163. President Ivanov added that 79 more soldiers will join the current contingent at the beginning of 2010 in a joint mission with the Vermont National Guard. Full text in para. 6.

¶3. Macedonia's soldiers have served with distinction in ISAF (and with no caveats), and have received numerous medals from NATO allies. They also were one of our allies in Iraq until the new U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement ended their deployment at the end of 2008. Their distinguished service there resulted in 163 medals including eight Bronze Stars.

¶4. Action request: Post requests a letter from President Obama thanking Macedonia for its continued support for ISAF and for agreeing to send more troops in 2010. We believe their distinguished service and further commitment merit this attention. Additionally, Macedonia not only continues to be blocked from joining the Alliance pending a solution to the "name issue" with Greece, but we anticipate that the same issue will prevent the Dec 10-11 European Council from giving Macedonia a date to commence EU accession talks. A letter from the President would help boost Macedonian morale among both the government and the people, as well as reinforce the importance of our joint efforts to succeed in Afghanistan.

¶5. Suggested Text: Thank you for your letter expressing Macedonia's continuing support for our joint effort to stabilize Afghanistan. On behalf of the American people, I want to express my gratitude for your efforts thus far and for your increased commitment in this critical period.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, we have been able to count on the people of Macedonia to stand by us and defend the cause of freedom. I salute the willingness of your people to stand with us, our Allies, and the Afghan people.

End text.

¶6. Text of letter from President Ivanov to President Obama (courtesy translation provided by the GOM):

BEGIN TEXT

Skopje, 2 December 2009

Honorable Mr. President,

Allow me to greet you cordially and to extend my assurances of highest appreciation to you and your great nation.

Mr. President, with reference to the announcement of the new Strategy on Afghanistan, I feel obliged to address you in order to reaffirm my strong support and the support of the Republic of Macedonia within this context.

I would like to assure you that the Republic of Macedonia and I personally highly appreciate your role on the global level, as well as your paramount contribution in making the world safer and more democratic. From the outset the Republic of Macedonia demonstrated its solidarity and contribution towards the joint mission in Afghanistan, and I hereby assure you of my country's commitment to remain with you, shoulder to shoulder, until the final goal is achieved.

Honorable Mr. President, we are fully aware that sustainable peace and stability can only be attained through providing not only for the national, but also through contributing to regional and to global security. The contribution of the Republic of Macedonia to the ISAF mission began symbolically back in 2002. Gradually, the contribution evolved into a rotation of a total of 1109 Macedonian peacekeepers. Today, our national contribution represents one of the largest (per capita) national contributions to the mission in Afghanistan. Currently, the Republic of Macedonia contributes with a total of 163 soldiers deployed in the ISAF mission.

Honorable Mr. President,

I am proud to confirm that the Republic of Macedonia will additionally increase its contribution to Afghanistan as of February 2010, with additional 80 soldiers. The Macedonian soldiers, embedded with the US National Guard of Vermont, will take part in the training and mentorship mission of the Afghan security forces. This significant increase of contribution of almost 50% will amount to a total of 260 deployed troops, which represents 4% of the land forces of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia, making my country one of the leading nations contributing to ISAF. Furthermore, allow me to inform you that the Republic of Macedonia is to gradually further increase its contribution to international operations up to 8% of its land forces by 2018.

I welcome the new approach of the United States in consolidating the situation in Afghanistan, announced at your address yesterday at the West Point Military Academy, and I assure you that my country shall provide an active contribution in this direction.

Honorable Mr. President, with regard to the foregoing, the Republic of Macedonia reaffirms its devotion to the Euro-Atlantic values and goals, it reaffirms its compatibility with the NATO standards and already acts as a full-fledged member. I am convinced that the day when the Republic of Macedonia will formally occupy its place within the big Euro-Atlantic family is not far away, a place it genuinely deserves.

With such fervor, please, accept warm and sincere regards from the Republic of Macedonia.

Dr. Gjorge Ivanov

END TEXT

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